



Water Quality NewsFlash

Published by California Department of Transportation, Division of Environmental Analysis, Office of Water Quality

October 4, 2004

Number 04-39

Legislation – New laws to help water quality – The governor recently signed into law several bills intended, in part, to benefit water quality:

- **Mercury** - *AB 1369 (Pavley)* prohibits the sale of mercury thermostats in California after January 1, 2005, with a few exceptions. Mercury thermometers are already banned (except by prescription) and the disposal of mercury-containing vehicle light switches is currently regulated. Elevated levels of mercury in fish are a problem in many waterways.
http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/bill/asm/ab_1351-1400/ab_1369_bill_20040921_chaptered.html
- **PBDEs** - *AB 2587 (Chan)* moves up the prohibition date to 2006 on two types of polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE) – pentaBDE and octaBDE. PBDEs are commonly used as fire retardants in foam and plastics. Scientists from Cal/EPA's Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) recently announced that they have found the highest levels of PBDEs in wildlife in the world in seabird eggs from the San Francisco Bay Area.. PBDEs are similar to the banned PCBs and have previously been detected in SF Bay fish and seals, as well as in humans. Water quality objectives have not been established for PBDEs but there is growing concern since levels of these chemicals appear to be rapidly increasing in the environment and in people. AB2587 posted: http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/bill/asm/ab_2551-2600/ab_2587_bill_20040921_chaptered.html DTSC report: http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/NewsReleases/2004/NEWS_2004_T-49-04.pdf Also see ES&T background info.: http://pubs.acs.org/subscribe/journals/esthag-w/2004/sep/science/kb_timelag.html
- **Ocean Protection Council** – *SB 1319 (Burton)* creates the *California Ocean Protection Act*, which will establish the Ocean Protection Council in state government. The council will coordinate activities of state agencies that are related to the protection and conservation of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems. The bill also establishes the California Ocean Protection Trust Fund for activities related to coastal and ocean resources.
http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/bill/sen/sb_1301-1350/sb_1319_bill_20040923_chaptered.html

In related news, the Department of Fish and Game has reactivated the *Marine Life Protection Act* (MLPA) process which had been put on “indefinite hold” in January 2004 due to budgetary constraints. New funding from the Resources Legacy Fund Foundation and other sources will allow the state to design and manage an improved network of marine protected areas. <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mrd/mlpa/>

Sea Lions – Increased infections – An unusually high number of sea lions rescued this year by the Marine Mammal Center are infected with leptospirosis. This bacterial disease also affects humans and other animals. It is spread through freshwater contaminated with animal urine. It is currently unknown how the sea lions are contracting the disease.
http://www.marinemammalcenter.org/learning/comm/press_releases.asp

WQ NewsFlash is a weekly update of storm water and related news for the Department. *Verify information before taking action on these bulletins.* Contact Betty Sanchez, Betty_Sanchez@dot.ca.gov (916) 653-2115, or Fred Krieger, (510) 843-7889, fkrieger@msn.com with questions or to be added or deleted from e-mail list. Posted online at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/env/stormwater/publicat/newsflash/index.htm>